

Dark Troubadour

Number Four



Autumn 1997

\$3.00



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Jack of Shadows

featuring original and traditional
songs of long, long ago, including
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Songs of A Dark Troubadour

by Chuck Owston

Well, I didn't expect to be putting out another issue of Dark Troubadour after I put out #3 last year. I was writing for the Fairport Convention/Folk-Rock magazine PORTHOLE. Two really nice issues of that mag (with slick covers, big photos, offset printing, full page ads from the record companies involved) came out . . . then PORTHOLE sank like a stone. Ripped off by everyone from the distributors to the bookstores to the record companies (yeah, a lot of them are crooks too), the noble publication succumbed to an untimely death.

It will be mourned by many folk/rock fans.

Though I am a real fan of the Fairport/Steeleye Span/Albion Band style of music, I also love the medieval, the ethereal, the rogue folk movements as well. After discovering bands like the Merlons of Nehemiah, Dark Lantern, Casey Neill, the Heathens, and La Nef, and being turned on to groups like Autumn Tears and Eland . . . I felt there was a need to resurrect the Dark Troubadour. Also, I had written two articles for Porthole on traditional ballads and they were well received . . . I had written two more that would never see the light of day . . . I decided that this would be a good place for them. Many of the gothic persuasion also are interested in such ballads, having come to them by way of Current 93, Faith and the Muse and Fire and Ice, rather than by Martin Carthy or Fairport Convention.

For the past 8 months I have been working on a video project . . . Olde Ballads, a two hour educational and performance video that deals with

the ballads of the British Isles and early America. This video and the articles, plus others that I plan to write in the future, will be the basis of a book I am writing called "Murder, Betrayal and Death." There are many ballad books, however, most of them are very dry and scholarly, written by college professors and musicologists. I've never read one that was written by a *singer* of ballads. I'm sure there may have been a few, but these things quickly go out of print.

I've been singing ballads since the early 60's and have performed for festivals, in concerts, at benefits, for schools, churches, civic groups, in classrooms, coffeehouses, at Renaissance faires, Medieval feasts, in community centers and prisons. Even on street corners, like troubadours of old. Probably my greatest thrill was performing on historic Cropredy Bridge in England in 1992. This was where the Battle of Cropredy Bridge was fought during the English Civil War in 1644.

I've never made a great deal of money singing medieval ballads and folk songs. I'm not "famous." Far from it. The few records that I released on "commercial" record labels brought very little (if any) financial returns. That's not why I started doing it to begin with. It's because I love the music.

The same thing is true with this magazine. The cover price barely pays for the thing. There is no great profit from doing this.

It's because I love the music.

I hope you do too. I know that Matt and Salamander and Kacey do as well. That's why they're doing it too.

Chuck Owston, editor



SONGS IN THE AUTUMN DARK

By Chuck Owston

The summer now is over,
the harvest moon's begun
And through the wheaten stubble
We see the settin' sun.
The leaves are turning yellow,
and fading into red,
And the bright and bearded barley
Is hanging down his head.

So go the words to an olde harvest song. Autumn is upon us ... with Maxfield Parrish blue skies and golden leaves ... a time of chill, misty mornings, of apples and cinnamon, corn shocks, scarecrows and pumpkins. Autumn nights are crisp and clear, the skies ablaze with fiery stars. It's a time of hayrides and bonfires, warm cocoa and spiced cider, Friday night football games and walks in the woods, harvest moons and your collar turned up against the wind.

But there's a dark side to the autumn. Right in the middle of the season, at the end of October, is Halloween, All Hallow's Eve, a day set aside by the Catholic Church to counter the pagan holiday of Samhain, the Celtic New Year. According to a variety of legends, this was the one night of the year when the ghosts of the dead walked once more. In other tales, it was when the Otherworld (the land of Faery) overlapped our world, the two spheres (or dimensions) coming together, with those from *there* appearing *here*. This all gave rise to innumerable stories and bits of ghostly lore.

And songs. Splendid songs of spectral visitants, beautiful Elfin queens and lords, unearthly beings of both loveliness and hideousness. For every beautiful Faery Queen

there was a horrible hag. For every dashing Elfin prince there was a loathsome fiend.

An old Cornish litany went this way:

From ghosties and ghoulies,
And long legged beasties
And things that go bump in the night,
Good Lord deliver us.

Probably the most well known of these songs, is Fairport Convention's "Tam Lin." It was recorded on the groundbreaking LIEGE & LIEF album, with Sandy Denny supplying the vocals. There's also an interesting version circulating around on tape that features a later Fairport with violinist Dave Swarbrick doing the vocals. It's a unique interpretation.

"Tam Lin" is definitely a Halloween song, even mentioning the holiday in its text, tying October 31 to the "Faery Ride" (or "Rade"), the night when they come to the earth to work their mischief on we poor mortals. Not only has Fairport Convention recorded this song, but West Coast folk-rockers Tempest have also done it, as well as Steeleye Span. The latter, however, features a different tune, one with Eastern European overtones. An earlier, even different version was recorded by Anne Briggs in the 60's and British gothic folkers, Current 93, have done it as well, in their own unique style.

"Tam Lin" is #39 in Professor Child's listing of English and Scottish ballads. The story is that of a young girl, Janet, who is forbidden to go to Carterhaugh, because "young Tam Lin" lives there. Anyway, being a headstrong young woman, she goes anyway, plucks the forbidden rose (shades of "Beauty and the Beast"), is confronted by Tam Lin, the elf-knight, is seduced, winds up pregnant . . .

In some versions, the conversation between Janet and her father is very similar to that between the king and his daughter (also named Janet) in "Willy o' Winsbury." This same

Willy, you may remember, may also have supernatural origins, being a lord of mysterious “summer lands.”

However, Tam Lin is really an earthly knight who has been held captive by the evil Queen of Faery. There is a way he can be restored to earthly life, and that is if Janet pulls him from his steed, holds him fast while the Queen is transforming him into all sorts of beasts. Eventually true love wins the day (or night as it happens to be.) And everybody’s happy but the queen.

Fairport changed the words a bit, since the piece had a Scottish or Border origin. Consider this verse, when compared to the final verse in Sandy’s version:

But had I kend, Tam Lin, she says,
What now this night I see
I wad hae taen out thy twa grey een
And put in twa een o tree.

A little different from “I’d have turned you to a tree,” which is the way Fairport did the song. In the notes to the Fellside release, *Ballads*, the writer says, “the Elf Queen’s wish that she had “put out his eyes” is not bourne out of vindictiveness, but because he has seen the secrets of Elfland and will take them to the human world.”

Frankie Armstrong, who does an acapella version of the song on the *Ballads* CD says, “At its heart there is a mystery and I have no desire to analyse this away -- even if it were possible -- I simply know that its power lies somewhere in the glorious weaving of words, images, story and tune and in something magical about tales of transformation.”

Apparently somebody made a movie of “Tam Lin,” but I’ve never seen it. Maybe some reader out there has a video of the thing.

In issue #4 of “Ballads and Sagas,” artist Charles Vess illustrated “Tam Lin.” It was interesting to see his artistic interpretation, and I enjoyed it immensely.

“Tam Lin” has also appeared in fantasy fiction, in two

books I have read. One is *Tam Lin* by Pamela Dean, a real twist on the tale ... a modern version set on a college campus among a group of theater students. The other is *Fire and Hemlock* by Deanna Wynne-Jones, which combines the Tam Lin story with that of Thomas the Rhymer, all set in modern day England. Both books are well worth your efforts to find them.

Which all brings us to another song of the supernatural, "Thomas the Rhymer," the definitive version recorded by Steeleye Span. Thomas is carted off to Elfland by the beautiful (naturally) Faery Queen. While there, he wasn't permitted to speak for seven years. Upon his return, he could speak nothing but the truth. Hence, he was known thereafter as "True Thomas."

Ellen Kushner has written an excellent book called *Thomas the Rhymer* and Charles Vess illustrated it for the first Ballads and Sagas comic book.

So far we've dealt with beautiful Elfin Queens. What about the other side of the coin?

The hags ... the third manifestation of the Celtic moon goddess. After Maiden and Mother, she becomes The Crone.

No one better fits the bill than Allison Gross. Steeleye Span sing this about her, in the chorus (which doesn't appear in the original version).

Allison Gross, she must be, the ugliest witch in the North Country . . .

Brian Froud did an excellent watercolor of Allison Gross in the Arthur Rackham style in his book, *The Book of Froud*. Yes, she is truly ghastly.

Allison Gross (Child35) is the tale of a young man who is offered many fine things if he'll just become Ms. Gross' sweetheart. Of course, he's put off by her horrible appearance.

Away, away, you ugly witch
Go far away and let me be
I never will be your lover so true

I wish I were out of your company

What's really interesting are the verses Steeleye leave out in their version. Prof. Child collected two verses that seemed to have been "borrowed" from either "Tam Lin" or "Thomas the Rhymer." After being turned into a crawling worm, the singer tells the following:

But as it fell fell out on last Halloween
When the fairy court was riding by
The Queen lighted down on a gowany bank
Not far from the tree where I would lie.

She took me up in her milk white hand
And she stroked me three time o'er her
knee

She changed me again to my proper self
And I no more must toddle around the
tree.

The male counterpart to Allison Gross is the murdering fiend, "Long Lankin." (Or "False Lamkin" as he is called in some versions). I first heard this song performed by Gothic folksinger Chad Porch, from Mt. Pleasant, PA., who says that he heard it from a British group called Fire and Ice. I searched out their version, but it was nowhere as chilling as Porch's version, which appears on DARK HARVEST, a cassette release of English ballads and Celtic songs with a dark bent.

Says the Lord to his Lady as he mounted his horse
Beware of Long Lankin who lives in the moss
Says Milord to Milady as he went on his way
Beware of Long Lankin who lives in the hay
See the doors are all bolted,
see the windows are pinned
Make sure there's no crack for him to creep in.

What follows is one of the bloodiest and most

gruesome tales of all time. The false nurse aids Lankin as he takes the heir, but a babe, and “Pricks him all over with a pin,” while the nurse holds a basin to catch the blood. Definitely not a song for the squeemish or the kiddies.

Down comes the lady, drawn by the screams of the child ... to her doom at the hands of Long Lankin.

The horror closes with these verses:

There’s blood in the kitchen, there’s blood in the hall
There’s blood in the parlour, where Milady did fall.

Steeleye Span also do a version, but it’s not nearly so stark and bare-bones.

In the “False Lambkin” variant, the woman’s father arrives, but too late to save either mother or babe. He swears this vow:

False Lambkin shall be hung, on the gallows so high
Where his bones shall be,
burned in the fire close by

Did you know that our word “bonfire” comes from “bonefire” originally?

Was Lankin merely (merely?) a homicidal maniac, or does the song indicate that he was something else, a *thing* that lived in the moss and the hay, a hobgoblin of some sort.

Which brings us to the subject of ghosts. British and Celtic folksongs abound with them. In the Fairport repertoire, we have Sandy’s version of “She Moves Through The Fair,” which has also been recorded by people like Sinéad O’Conner, Julianne Regan (with Ric Sanders on violin), Marie Alexander, Pentangle, and the Trees. Even ol’ Van Morrison had a go at it, on his album with the Chieftains.

Another Fairport song, “Reynardine” is open to interpretation. Some folk think he’s just a rake, others that he’s a changling creature, a sort of were-fox or werewolf.

Others think him a vampire, with his “teeth that did brightly shine” and hypnotic powers.

Both Pentangle and The Old Blind Dogs have recorded versions of “Cruel Sister,” a song based on the Scottish ghost story “The Song of the Sorrowing Harp.” The question is raised, “Which came first?”

In the story, the younger, fair sister is pushed from a cliff into the sea by her jealous, black haired sister. The dead girl’s body floats along until it is found by a minstrel (or two, depending on the version), who makes a harp of her breastbone. (This is a pretty grim troubadour, sort of the Richard Thompson of the 12th Century). Then he strings it with three strands of her golden hair.

Lo and behold, the minstrel arrives at the castle, just as the black-haired sister is about to be married to her dead sister’s ex-boyfriend. This soap opera closes with the harp beginning to sing on its own, accusing the guilty murderess. A real piece o’ doom ‘n’ gloom.

In “The Cruel Mother”, recorded by Steeleye Span, Tory Voodoo and the John Renbourn Group, the mother kills her babe (or babes, depending on the variant), and on her way back from burying him/them, she is confronted by his/their ghosts, who condemn her to Hell.

Speaking of ghosts and Hell in the same breath, we move on to “The House Carpenter,” or “the Daemon Lover.” In this tale, the wife of the House Carpenter is seduced by a ghost/demon/rake (depending on the version). She leaves her home and babes, goes to sea, gets caught in a storm, the ship starts to sink, and she sees “those dark hills of Hell, my love, where you and I must go.” There are numerous renditions of this song floating around. Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Pentangle and Tempest are but a few who have recorded it. Each one is slightly different from the other. It’s another tale that was illustrated by Charles Vess in *Ballads & Sagas*.

There are plenty of other ghostly tales in the realm of traditional song. The Trees recorded the story of “Lady Margaret,” with a tune very akin to “Matty Groves.” Steeleye

Span tell the uncanny tale of “King Henry” and the female demon he met one night while hunting. Several bands have recorded the eerie “Unquiet Grave,” most recently Faith and The Muse, who give it an acoustic, very medieval rendering, sounding much like it might have in the 1400's.

The very first ballad I ever heard, over forty years ago on a TV program, “Pretty Polly,” is a murder ballad with ghostly overtones. In the 1960's, the Knob Lick Upper 10,000 recorded a version with this haunting verse:

Polly, pretty polly, yonder she stands
Gold rings on her fingers
And fog around her hands.

There are a lot of good songs out there that go bump in the autumn night. And if that's not enough, get yourself a book of faery lore or ghost stories and write your own.

That's what some singers have done.

Hence, we have some newer ghostly songs recorded by people like Lief Sorbye (“The Barrow Man”), Loreena McKennit (“All Souls’ Night”), Kate Price (“The Ballad of the Bog”) and Pat Kilbride (“Tir Na Og”). These are just a few, there are many others..

Several years ago, when my two daughters were young, I was reading to them about Jenny Greenteeth, a hag who lived in a Yorkshire river, and Jackie Lantern, the ghost of a young girl who roamed the moors carrying a lantern in her hand, luring men to their doom in the bogs. My girls suggested that I sing songs about these supernatural creatures.

“There aren't any,” I said.

“Then why don't you write them?” they answered. So I did. After all, that's what people did years ago, and what's still being done today. You might want to try your own hand at it. Search out a local legend or ghostly tale and set it to music.

That's the great thing about all this folklore. The more you search, the more stories, tales and songs you find. We've just touched on a few here. There are hundreds out there.

They are great to sing on chill nights when the autumn wind is
sighing through the skeletal trees and there's a big orange
harvest moon peeking down like a goblin lantern.

Just make sure you've got a hot mug of cider close at
hand.

Johnny Scarecrow
a ballad by Chuck Owston

They call me Johnny Scarecrow
And I haunt the roads at night
And if you chance upon me
I'll give your soul a fright
Your blood will turn to water
And chills run down your spine
You'll never drown the memory
In the redness of your wine.

They hung me on the gallows hill.
But I refused to die
They laughed like heck as they broke my neck
The crows picked out my eyes.
They cursed my name to Heaven
They damned my soul to Hell
They put me in a pauper's grave
My body there to dwell.

But when the mist is on the moor
And a red moon sails the sky
Watch out for Johnny Scarecrow
The ghost who would not die
And if you hear a footstep
Behind you in the night
You better run for all you're worth
If you would save your life.

Do not plead for mercy
For none was given me
And though I pleaded innocence
They hung me on that tree
And now I haunt the highroads
The forest and the dell
Until the Day of Judgment
Or I've sent them all to Hell.

Chad Porch



Songs From The SHADOWS

Chad Porch is a Gothic acoustic guitarist and singer from Mt. Pleasant, Pa. He has been a frequent favorite at the Blue Grotto Coffeehouse in White Oak, PA. This past June he headlined a show called "Songs From The Shadows," in which he performed a variety of material, from traditional murder ballads to dark originals to interpretations of songs by Sol Invictus and Death in June. His voice has been compared to

Brendan Perry of Dead Can Dance and Rick Cave. Not bad company if you like your music dark. Chad's chilling version of the traditional ghost ballad "Long Lankin" appeared on the Dark Harvest compilation cassette, and received favorable reviews in the local newspaper. We caught up with Chad in early August and he gave us this interview.

Q: What are your musical influences?

CP: I have many. The first music that made me pick up an acoustic guitar and play seriously was a few different bands: Current 93, Sol Invictus, and Death in June. When I heard their music it just blew me away. the lyrics, just the content of the songs. Very poetic. Pervious to that I listened to a lot more harsh music. Way back I listened to punk rock, then I got into Industrial-type Gothic. I still listen to a wide variety of music. Oh, and Owl-Stone the Minstrel is an influence.

At the same time I was listening to Current 93 and those bands I was getting into things like John Dowland and the Renaissance music, mostly the courtly type music. I was into Dead Can Dance a lot. Also some Eastern folk music. Many influences ... it's hard to pinpoint.

Q: Besides the guitar, do you play any other instruments?

CP: I messed around with bass guitar. But I wasn't in a band or anything. I had like one bass lesson. I play classical guitar, steel string acoustic guitar, and play a little bit of semi-acoustic electric guitar.

I do hope to broaden my horizons and learn other instruments. At the Renaissance Faire I really liked the ocarinas they had. I'm going to learn to play that. I'm thinking of getting a dombra drum. I just got a 4 track so I can layer things as I wish. That opens up a lot of possibilities. I'd love to learn hammered dulcimer. Time seems to be the biggest

problem.

Q: When did you first become interested in Traditional Music?

CP: I never really much attention to Traditional Music until I got into the bands I mentioned like Current 93, more so even Sol Invictus are very into traditional songs. Later Fire and Ice. They are heavily into Traditional Music. That's when I really took notice ... I liked a lot of the lyrics. Previous to that I looked at Traditional Music as "Johnny Row Your Boat Ashore." When I listened to bands that were into European folk, which is a lot different. I never cared for folk music ... I never liked Bob Dylan and Judy Collins and the whole American folk thing. The European folk music was a lot different, a lot darker. Not happy.

Q: Do you personally consider your music Gothic?

CP: I knew you'd ask that. (Laughs). It's like there's so many people out there now that don't want to be called "Gothic," they don't want anything to do with it. And there's so many bands that sound alike, when you tell someone you're Gothic, they think you sound like Bauhaus or the Sisters of Mercy. It's not that they were bad bands, it just that so many bands have followed suit and sound exactly the same. Whereas people who don't want to be called "Gothic" are trying to do something different. They want to be known for their own sound. I hope my songs are different. I don't want to just copy my influences.

"Gothic" as a label in music has changed, though, recently, because of the whole variety of people that are now considered Gothic. Now there's "Darkwave," "Tribal," "Dark Folk Music," you have the harsher electric guitar type gothic music that doesn't sound the same as Bauhaus or the Sisters. Of course, there's the "Ethereal music," which I'm really influenced by. I've always liked the Cocteau Twins, Dead Can Dance ...

I wouldn't mind being called "Gothic," because that's the audience that would like my music. If you don't have a label at all, you might be lumped in with Barry Manilow. (Laughs). You don't know where they're going to put your music. Without a label, you're not going to have an audience, and your music's not going to get heard.

Q: What are some of your favorite groups right now?

CP: I listen to a wide variety of stuff right now. Love Spirals Downwards is definitely one of my favorites. And Eden. I really like Faith and the Muse. I'm looking forward to seeing them at the show in August. Also Renaissance Music and the bands I mentioned earlier. I love anything Eastern. Tribal ... PSOS are excellent. Anything that's trying to be different. A lot of acoustic stuff. . . soloists like Alex DeGrassi.

Q: What are your current musical plans?

CP: I'm working on my demo tape right now. Probably a 5 or 6 song demo, maybe more. I'm getting more equipment . . . I am recording a good bit. At the same time I'm writing new material.

Q: Are you recording all originals, or are you going to do some covers or Trad tunes?

CP: I'm not real sure yet. I was going to do a tape of all originals, and then do another tape of all traditional songs. Then I thought I might want to mix some traditional with the originals. I do a lot of traditional, and they all wouldn't fit on the tape with my originals.

I may do a couple with my originals and then do a tape of all traditional songs. My sound is a little different than when I play solo. I don't know if the people who hear me play live would like the more traditional sounding . . . not a lot of effects. There's so much I want to do. . . so many ideas. I don't want to limit myself.

Another influence I've had later is some psychedelic music, which I never paid much attention to until recently. Early Pink Floyd with Sid Barrett. Stuff like that is really interesting. I can see how a lot of gothic and alternative bands are influenced by that. It's really good music.

Who knows what I'm going to do later. I even thought of a mess of traditional instruments but kind of playing them really harsh, kind of with some psychedelic thrown in there, as if there was a psychedelic band back then, a psychedelic goth band back in the Renaissance. Put a lot of effects of hammered dulcimers ... mandolins.

Q: It sounds like what happened in the late 60's, when some of those bands that were rock oriented went into British folk music and it had somewhat of a psychedelic sound, but not the traditional sound . . . They kind of made their own sound.

Who are some of your favorite authors?

CP: A couple of years ago I got into Jean Paul Sarte. Some of Reitchze. Recently I am reading the book, "The Medieval Underworld" by James McCall. I like Edgar Allen Poe. Love Shakespeare. P.D. James. I like a lot of ghost stories. Anything paranormal. I was into aliens and UFO's, before the media got ahold of it. Now it's kind of exploded everywhere. I read a lot about government cover-ups. Lately more ghost stories. The last one I finished was "Ghost Stories of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County." Really interesting.

Q: What would you like to be doing in 5 years?

CP: It sounds like a job interview question. (Laughs).

Q: I mean musically.

CP: Five years (in ominous voice). I'd like to be signed to a label.

That would be nice, but I'll definitely still be playing music. Just keep advancing. I'd like to have learned

a lot of new instruments.

I'm sure I will have added more to my repertoire than I have now. Lately I've gotten more into the Medieval and Renaissance music, after going to the Renaissance Faire (near Chad's home). It was really interesting.

Q: Have you ever thought of pursuing that ... of traveling with the Festival? You know, from faire to faire, that whole vagabond lifestyle?

CP: Not really. I work full time. It would just be so hard to just leave everything. It might have been nice years ago, but now I just can't pick up and go. It sounds nice, but I don't want to play just that music, even though I have influences with it. It's great how those people can do that. True artisans.

Q: What was the last CD that you bought?

CP: I just bought one yesterday. The Sky Cries Mary. "Moonbathing ..." I don't know if I remember the whole title ... "Moonbathing ... something Under the Leaves." It was Okay. Nothing fabulous or anything. But it's pretty interesting music.

That wraps up our interview with Chad Porch. Look for him soon in Concert. He will be part of the lineup at this year's Celtic Harvest 7 at the Blue Grotto Coffeehouse, White Oak, Pa. The date is Oct. 11, 1997 at 8 p.m. He will be joined by Carnival of Souls, former members of A Company of Knaves and Revelations in Black, as well as Briar Rose, Owl-Stone the Minstrel, and a few surprises.



Dark Lantern

DARK LANTERN

SP002

I first heard of this group last year. They were doing extensive gigging in England and it seemed that every time I picked up a British folk mag, there was some reference to them.

Finally, I got the chance to hear them as a result of this cassette release (it's also on CD).

It was well worth the wait. "Watching The Evening Go," kicks off the tape. Allan Greenwood's vocals remind me of a young Ralph McTell, with all the "husk and bark" intact. Just when you didn't think it could get any better, here comes the haunting fiddle and ethereal voice of Samantha Holmes. An incredible opener to a fine album. "Two And A Stone," a

traditional instrumental follows with some incredible interplay between the guitar and the violin. This piece transcends the usual “Rigs & Jeels” you get as filler on many folk-rock records. There’s a lot happening here . . . it’s hard to believe that these are just two people.

“Cold To Touch” begins with gentle piano soundscapes as a background to Samantha’s vocals. Her voice reminds me of one of the girls who sang with the late 60’s folk-rock group, Bread, Love And Dreams. (Since they had two girl singers in that group, I don’t know which one it was, but the song was “Artificial Light.” Maybe some reader out there can enlighten me on the subject.)

“Instincts” features crystalline guitar work and interesting interplay between the male and female vocalists. This cut reminds me of some of the work of ethereal acoustic/electric bands like Underflowers and Love Spirals Downwards. However, these vocals are more upfront, rather than buried in the echo and the mix. “Time Has No Meaning” has some interesting imagery, with twin guitars, hearkening back to those Jansch/Renbourn duets, a combination of jazz and baroque elements. Samantha has obviously set aside her fiddle for the acoustic guitar on this piece.

“Tom’s Castle” is an instrumental mood piece that just begs for a movie. You can almost see the wild highlanders with drawn claymores running through the heather, their voices raised in barbaric war cries.

“Houses” gives another vocal interpretation by Samantha Holmes. A lot of the ethereal/gothic audience would like this, though it’s not the kind of music usually reviewed in publications like *The Third Nail*, *Propaganda* and *Ghastly*. There’s some real haunting vocal harmonies here.

“Turn And Turn Around” returns to the twin guitar format. These folks offer a guitar workshop when they do festivals. After hearing this, I’d like to attend. The interplay is extraordinary. The rhythm and fingerpicking defy description.

“Fugitive” has a rogue folk feel. Once again, Samantha’s violin perfectly compliments Allen’s vocals and

guitar. A song of angst and alienation. "Darkness Outside" begins with a medieval-sounding introduction in a minor key on the guitar. The fiddle drones in the background for a verse like a haunted hurdy-gurdy, then comes to the fore. Distant wordless vocals and harmonics add to the mysterious mix.

"Cutting The Preliminaries" finishes out the tape with more guitar pyrotechnics.

This is the best album I've heard in the last year. An acoustic *tour de force* . . . very English . . . very good. I hope they tour the States some day. I'd drive 300 miles to hear them play in concert. You Brits don't know how lucky you are to have Dark Lantern on your own doorstep.

Chuck Owston



PHOTO CREDITS &ARTWORK

Front Cover: Chuck Owston

Inside Front Cover: Jason Lambert

Back Cover: "The Long Black Veil," artwork by Elaine Daley

Photo of Chad Porch: Chuck Owston

Artwork, pg. 29, by Elaine Daley

Photo of Dark Lantern, submitted by the band

Melancholy Musings

Gothic/Ethereal

Reviews

By Matt Heilman

Hello, and welcome to the premier edition of the *Melancholy Musings* column, a column dedicated to reviewing the best and most current offerings available within the vast and blossoming dark music genre. I want to thank Chuck Owston for allowing me to create this column for his 'zine. My initial goal is to expose the art of lesser known bands with exceptional, extraordinary, and original talent to you, the open minded reader. As well as presenting honest reviews of recent releases from the familiar artists who have already touched our hearts and stirred our emotions in the past. Enjoy!

Autumn Tears

Love Poems For Dying Children
(*Dark Symphonies*)

The debut CD from New England's Autumn Tears could quite possibly be the finest vampire influenced ethereal recording in existence. Very few bands have ever succeeded in capturing the tragic essence of the vampire and set it to music that accurately reflects the mind set of the characters, but this CD has done just that. The lyrics delve into the scarred psyche of a vampiress who longs for the company of her own child, though being undead, she cannot conceive a child naturally, so her last resort is to steal away their innocence and embrace them into her world of eternal shadow. The Baroque and classical styled music mirrors the guilt that plagues her as well as the pain of her loneliness. The entire CD is arranged like that of a symphony, with different movements and variations of earlier melodies. Certain cathedral organ passages have a likeness to Bach's "Fugue in D" and other orchestrations are reminiscent of "Within The Realm Of A Dying Sun" era Dead Can Dance. All the music is performed on a keyboard and invokes an intense atmosphere for cold and lonely autumn evenings.

Autumn Tears consists of only two members, lead vocalist Erika and back up vocalist/ keyboardist Ted, and being that this is their first and only CD, it is quite impressive. According to the band's Internet cite, the tale of this vampiress is to continue and to be composed in ten acts, the second of which is due out soon and is entitled "The Garden Of Crystalline Dreams."

For information on Autumn Tears and for a catalog specializing in Gothic/Ethereal and Black Metal music, write:

Dark Symphonies
P.O. Box 539
Billerica, MA 01821

My Dying Bride
Like Gods Of The Sun
(*Music For Nations/ Peaceville*)

For those who might prefer Gothic music with a metallic edge, My Dying Bride will quench your every desire and leave you thirsting for more. *Like Gods Of The Sun* is the fourth full length effort by this Yorkshire sextet, and it is their most suburb offering yet. My Dying Bride has crafted their sound to a wonderfully original, stark and highly emotional brand of Gothic music that cannot be paralleled. Though words cannot do justice when describing their music, imagine if you will haunting keyboard passages and atmospheric violins layered above a wall of detuned distorted guitar and driving drums. The vocal styling of frontman Aaron Stainthorpe has reached its pinnacle, and never before has his brooding tenor sounded so full of passion and anguish. The harsh vocal style which appeared on early albums has been scrapped altogether so vocal critics can no longer complain that My Dying Bride are just another "schlock death metal act with violins."

As with early albums, *Like Gods...* is a concept album, exploring the undying devotion of two lovers. "We burn like gods of the sun, our world will change for no one." The lyrics are by far some of the most poetic and romantic in the entire scene, which is a talent that My Dying Bride proved way back in '91 on their first E.P. "*Symphonaire Infernus et Spera Empyrium*" where the lyrics read like Shakespeare. Without a doubt the most beautiful song on the entire album is the closing track *For My Fallen Angel*, a melancholy requiem with spoken vocals over violin, synthesized strings and a choir. Other standout tracks include *A Kiss To Remember*, a love song with vampiric overtones and *All Swept Away*, the albums heaviest song, which features brilliant violin and guitar harmonization as well as a merciless and driving beat. The mix of this new album has a much punchier sound than its predecessor, 1995's "*The Angel And The Dark River*," which was a much darker, more depressive album. However, even though the new album is a bit more upbeat, fans of dark music will not be disappointed and will go through more bottles of red wine than usual after they discover My Dying Bride.

Their is simply no excuse for the lack of attention that this band has received from the Gothic underground other than the fact that the scene has become disgustingly close minded. But for those who are not afraid of something new, there is an entire scene of music that is rooted in Europe and there are well over a dozen bands such as Celestial Season, Anathema, Paradise Lost, and Moonspell to name just a few that deliver dark art at its finest and most musical.

Elend
Weeping Nights
(Holy Records)

France's Elend is a band that formed in 1992 with lots of hopes and quite a few aspirations. Though I have not come across a single person who has heard of the band and I have never come across an article on them in any music magazines, I believe that the band has accomplished their original goals and perhaps even gone further. Formed by two classically trained musicians who besides their knowledges of Baroque and Renaissance era music, they also had a passion for Black Metal. Their purpose was to compose dark classical music that possessed the same violent imagery and Gothic atmosphere of the immensely underrated Black metal scene of Europe. After completing their line-up with the addition of a female soprano vocalist, Elend released 1994's *Lecons De Tenebres* and 1995's *Les Tenebres Du Dehors* and proved that the marriage of these two different yet similar styles of music could be achieved successfully.

Elend is by far not a metal band, but the strength and intensity, as well as the violin passages are very similar to the downpicking guitar parts which make up Black metal. Basically, what Elend is doing is proving that there is talent beneath the distortion and high pitched screaming of Black metal bands such as Emperor and Cradle Of Filth, by playing the same music substituting the guitars for a wide array of classical instruments and the high pitched shrieks for female soprano vocals and choirs. And for this they should most certainly be applauded.

Weeping Nights is not the newest studio release, but it is a great introduction to the band for it does contain three new tracks and the rest of the CD consists of reworked tracks from the *Les Tenebres Du Dehors* CD.

Write for a catalog featuring Elend and various other Gothic/Metal/
Ethereal bands:

Relapse Records
PO Box 251
Millersville, PA 17551

Black Lodge
Covet
(Head Not Found)

Imagine the slowest, most sludgy doom metal song you have ever heard, then imagine a band who performs similar songs at more than half *that* speed and you have Black Lodge. This CD is depressing!!! The listener in some passages suffers suspense and impatience just awaiting the next note to sound! Though *Covet* has it's 'faster' moments (I use that term *very* loosely) which are reminiscent of early My Dying Bride and at times hardcore bands like Neurosis or Korn, the majority of the CD features eerie drawn out guitar harmonizing that make Type O Negative look like speed metal. If the density of this band does not carve them a niche in the doom metal underground, then the trade off vocals will without a doubt. The guttural male vocals are riddled with anguish and quite honestly, I haven't heard such emotion expressed in such an aggressive style since Anathema's early work. However, what I liked most about this CD are the female vocals which at times evoke a suicidal Tori Amos and other times she creates a sincerely frightening atmosphere that will send chills up the spine of the listener.

I highly recommend this CD for those who are interested in the exploring the Gothic/Doom metal scene and can stomach aggressive vocals



Black Tape For A Blue Girl *Remnants Of A Deeper Purity* (Projekt)

Yet another fine release from Projekt records' *Black Tape For A Blue Girl*, however, it seems that premier songwriter Sam Rosenthal has outdone himself this time around. *Remnants Of A Deeper Purity* plunges into the very depths of inner most sorrow. The entire album revolves around heartache and fallen romance, with the seemingly hopeless act of 'moving on' to be the only answer to the questions that all human beings have asked at one time or another. This CD will pluck the heart strings of any one who chooses to listen to it, and though the listener may wallow in self-pity throughout the 77 minute duration of the recording, once the last track comes to a close, they just might view life through a less opaque window.

For this, *Black Tape's* sixth release, the violins and cello take center stage, and the anguished vocals of Oscar Herrera and angelic soprano of Lucian Casselman narrate this journey into exquisite sadness. The CD's opening track, "Redefine Pure Faith" is nearly unforgettable and sets the basic tone for the album. The extensive "For You Will Burn Your Wings Upon The Sun" stands out on several levels, mostly for its bitter yet all to relevant lyrics and also for its dreamy, violin and cello interlude that lasts over twenty minutes! Definitely not for a sunny day. The CD's title track features Spanish flavoured acoustic guitar and is probably the albums most 'upbeat' song, however, that term is used quite loosely. The closing track, "I Have No More Answers" is the crowning dirge of the CD, for Ms. Casselman's vocals are simply beautiful, and if she does not move the listener to tears, the listener must not have a soul.

Projekt records has never really even released an album that was not worthy of praise, but all the praise in the world could never quite be enough for *Black Tape For A Blue Girl*. If you do not own this CD, what are you waiting for?

The Passion Of Covers: A Tribute To Bauhaus (Cleopatra)

Cleopatra has released yet another great Gothic/Industrial compilation, this time paying homage to one of the great innovators of Goth music, the unparalleled Bauhaus. The CD is comprised of thirteen interpretations of classic and obscure Bauhaus songs. The CD begins with The Electric Hell-Fire Club's industrialization of the notorious hit "Bela Lugosi's Dead," and already the song is a hit at Goth clubs much like it was over 15 years ago. Faith & The Muse's haunting version of "Hollow Hills" is absolutely amazing and is probably the darkest and most dramatic song on the entire album. Not far behind is Fahrenheit 451 and Eva O Halo's reworking of "The Three Shadows," a song I myself was not familiar with but loved nonetheless. Two Witches does a deliciously mischievous "King Voleano" and Ikön completely nailed "She's In Parties." The song sounds so close to the original that I almost could not tell the difference. Other highlights include Kill Switch... Klick's "Dark Entries," and "In The Flat Field" by This Ascension. The CD could have done without Black Atmosphere's "Muscle In Plastic" and Eleven Shadows' "Terror Couple Kill Colonel." By no means were the songs really bad, but personally I thought the songs were may be bad choices to include, considering that such classic songs as "Mask" and "Stigmata" are absent from the CD. Overall, it is an eclectic and well put together CD that honours rather than imitates Bauhaus, and plus the moving hologram of Nosferatu attacking his sleeping victim on the cover would capture the attention of the common vampire/gothic enthusiast and amuse them for a little while as well!

Though I know that it is completely out of season to review this CD, I do not wish to wait until Christmas to express my disappointment. When I first heard about this CD, I was highly anticipating hearing my favourite Projekt artist's interpretations of Christmas hymns and I expected it to be much better than it turned out to be. Being that Christmas songs alone are not exactly cheerful, I assumed that this was going to be quite a depressing listening experience. For the most part I was wrong. The CD begins with Arcanta's "Carol of the Bells," which along with Lycia and Loveliescrushing, is very dark and along the lines of what I expected. But when I heard Love Spirals Downwards offering, I nearly died. It wasn't that I didn't like their interpretation of "Welcome Christmas," the theme from Dr. Seuss' *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*, but it was hilarious! Faith And The Muse surprised me as well, because I knew they would have done some Irish or Welsh traditional Christmas song, but I expected something a little more somber. This Ascension also did "Carol Of The Bells," which was one of the few highlights of the CD, though I liked Type O Negative's excerpt of this song on "Red Water" from the *October Rust* album much better. Human Drama's Mark Baldera orchestrated a great version of "What Child Is This?" Being that it was chalk full of synthesized strings, I was instantly sold. Various incarnations of Black Tape For A Blue Girl make up half of this CD; besides the song that Black Tape perform, FuchiKachis Ethu(?) features Lucian and Sam Rosenthal is just about everywhere. The Black Tape song surprisingly leaves much to be desired...as did most of the CD. I guess my expectations ruined it, and perhaps to the unexpected listener, this CD would be very good. Truthfully, it is not as bad as it may seem, but I expected more from such a talented gathering of artists.

Amorphis
Elegy
(Relapse Records)

How does one describe this band? Gothic/Folk/Death metal? Whatever the case, Amorphis is a band that has been growing in popularity for the past couple years now and their highly original style has just expanded its horizons even further. Though I must admit, I did not like this CD nearly as much as their previous effort *Tales From The Thousand Lakes*, simply because that album was much darker. This album has its similarities yet it is much more experimental and it is very progressive. Amorphis hail from Finland and what is so unique about them is they set ancient Finnish folktales to music. The lyrics to *Elegy* are taken from "The Kantelar," a collection of poems which depict the everyday sorrows and joys of the Finnish people. The music is very diversified, drawing influences from just about everywhere. Certain keyboard passages are reminiscent of Rush and has a very 70's sort of vibe while there are some Gothic choirs and pianos floating about. There is a vast array of guitar styles on this album as well, ranging from crunchy Metallica-esque downpicking to fuzzed out wah pedal solos to acoustic folk guitar jams. There are two vocalists which compliment each other rather well, one to handle the aggressive, growly parts and another clear-throated vocalist to handle the more subdued, acoustic parts.

Amorphis have really caused quite a stir in the underground and are definitely one of the most original acts out there. Fans of folk music should really check out *Elegy* because it offers something very different and interesting and it is not as heavy as their earlier albums. But for fans of Goth and doom, definitely check out the ... *The Thousand Lakes* CD because there are much more pianos and strings rather than the 70's retro stuff that pollute *Elegy* and it is an essential Goth metal recording.

The Merlons of Nehemiah

I chanced upon two releases by this German medieval/goth/rock band in a used CD store in Pittsburgh. The band's name intrigued me, as well as pictures of the group. When I saw one of the members playing a hurdy-gurdy I was even more intrigued. Not only do they play the hurdy-gurdy, they also play French bagpipes, recorders, fiddles, bombards, mandolins, citterns and other medieval instruments. But they're not an Early Music ensemble -- there are also pounding drums, crunching guitars and rumbling bass. It's like folk-rock taken one step further, or Early Music dragged screaming into the New Millennium.

There are three vocalists -- one female with an ethereal "heavenly" voice (They appear on Hypprium's *Heavenly Voices 3*) and two male vocalists, very German, very Gothic. It makes for not only an interesting combination, but also one that may appeal to a varied audience. Fans of Dead Can Dance, the 60's folk-rock crowd, goths into the ethereal sound may all find something here to delight the aural senses.

CARTONEY is the first disc, and contains some traditional melodies from the 13th and 14th Centuries. It is the "lighter" more ethereal of the discs, having more of an acoustic base. Drone's abound in the first song, with Antji's voice soaring above in heavenly places.

ELUOAMJ is a double CD, one full length and one mini. The full length disc is the heaviest, verging on medieval metal at some points. All the songs are excellent, from the harp backed ethereal pieces to the crunching "Devil's Dance," which approaches death metal. My favorite cut is "Winter," a song about marauding wolves that come out of the forests to snack on the hapless villagers.

On the mini-disc, the Merlons take a different approach. It's almost rogue folk, sounding at times like the Oyster Band or the Levellers. "Utopia" has that working man, left of center political approach we've come to associate with the rogues. Well worth your hard earned dollars.

Chuck Owston



KACEY'S KOLUMN

by Kacey Comini Sherrod

For those of you who don't know Kacey, she was the flamboyant gypsy singer and tambourine player (yes, she really played that thing, she didn't just beat it against her hip like some stoned hippy chick out of the 60's) from A Company of Knaves. She appears in the new Aetheria Video, "Olde Ballads," in many of the concert shots. This is her Dark Troubadour debut.

--ye olde editor

Maddy Prior and the Carnival Band
HANG UP SORROW AND CARE OR ... A CURE
FOR ALL MELANCHOLY Park Records 1996

Like the CD sleeve "sez", this latest effort by Maddy P. is a sure cure for all melancholy. Maddy's pure voice, combined with the fine musicianship of the Carnival Band is a treat for listeners of all types. On track 2 are four old instrumental tunes. Andrew Watts plays a lovely Flemish bagpipes intro. Combined with the other period instruments, the song weaves a lovely story of heather and heath. Anyone enjoying fine music from the traveling minstrels of the Dark Ages and through the period of "Enlightenment" will truly love this record.

My feelings about the lyrics in this collection are those of timelessness. The 1500's - 1600's may seem far away now, but these songs could well be speaking about any one of us alive today. For instance, "The Jovial Beggar" could be a lighthearted song about any panhandler you see on the street today. Maddy and crew have chosen songs from the

15-1600's, yes, but they are timeless.

The use of traditional tunes and instruments are not an antique in the making. Maddy Prior and her band have created a fresh, new, exciting sound of 90's medieval music. Dig in and happy listening!

Kacey Comini Sherrrod



Salamander's Reviews

By Salamander Scarlett

Greetings. For those who enjoy "medieval" goth, "dark folk" or just great music, I have some suggestions. Medieval/acoustic rock by ENGELSTAUB, a band that sings about demons, God, pagan sacrifice . . .

*The first CD *Malleus Malificarum* is excellent. The music is nothing short of SUPERB. Both male and female vocals. More of the female vocals on their second offering *Ignus Fatuus/Irrlichter*. More succubi, ghosts, demons, visions of angles, demons, God and Jesus . . . Lovely, pleasing music, to go with the perfect male & (Really pretty) female vocals. This is a band who considers themselves both occult and gothic. Very literate. There's even a Lovecraftian reference on "The Dream Daemon." You do not have to be a fan of any particular type of music to appreciate this.*

Something that will appeal to fans of early Dead Can Dance, as well as your Renaissance Faire Performers, but with a depressing sounding singer are Sopor Aeternus and the Ensemble of Shadows.

Their first, self-titled CD, probably the hardest to find, is the most gothic of all. It's the least acoustic, but still highly recommended. You won't be switching tracks on this CD.

*The second full length CD *Todeswunsch* has about 20 songs. Very medieval. Some of the vocals are dark and deep, others are desperate, pleading screams. This CD has a very interesting cover. The music is even more interesting. Many authentic medieval instruments seem to be used.*

There is also a special edition mini CD. Only 400 copies were made, making it a collector's item. Though the packaging and the poster are creepy and cool, the music is not up to their usual high standards. I don't remember the title of this mini CD, but the title was in Hebrew.

Then there is the brand new CD, which says on the cover "The Inexperienced Spiral Traveler" and on the inside "Totenlicht." There are 12 tracks, but no song titles nor lyrics printed. This will not take away from your enjoyment. Could this be sinister chamber music or the skeleton minstrels you see in so many old woodcuts? (What a great name for a goth band -- the Skeleton Minstrels of the Olde Woodcuts! ... Editor) You'll think of both things. THE KEYBOARD SOUNDS LIKE A BIG CHURCH ORGAN. There are pipes and you can imagine people actually dancing medieval dances to this music. It's downright haunting.

These can be ordered from:

ISOLATION TANK 1/215/886-0914

or Nightbreed Records

2nd floor, 177 Wollaton Street

Nottingham, NG1 5GE England

write for a catalogue.

All these happen to be German imports, though Sopor Aeternus does have a rather English sound. Is it me or have the Germans in their cold Northern climate surrounded by dark forests, come up with the scariest tales?

Stay out of the sun! Enjoy the warm nights!

Salamander

THE BOOK OF BALLADS AND SAGAS #3

Green Man Press, Bristol, VA.

Here comes Mr. Vess once again, weilding his magic pen and fertile imagination. Again he tackles two of the most well known Child ballads. The first is "Barbara Allen." When I lived in Kentucky in the early 60's and did field research on folksongs, the one song everyone knew, in one form or another, was "Barbara Allen." The script is by Midori Snyder and the illustrations are by the impeccable Charles Vess. This version of Child 84 features an appearance by a Leanan-Sidhe, a female Irish vampire.

"The Galltee Farmer" is next, a Broadside ballad" by Jeff Smith and Charles Vess. It's a bit of lighthearted fun.

My favorite is next. "The Daemon Lover," Child 243, also known as "The House Carpenter." When Dylan recorded this for his first LP in 1962 (it was deleted, but surfaced later in the 80's), he introduced it this way, in his "old" Guthrie-type voice, "This here song's about a ghost come in from the sea." Vess' pen and ink work are truly over the moon on this one. The last two pages contain some of the best black and white illustrations anywhere.

Then comes a nice article called "Southern Folk Ballads," followed by "A Vess Miscellany," a collection of full page illos, and then the scary Kansas folk tale, "Scarecrow," just in time for autumn.

Also, while you're out there at your local comix emporium, you might want to pick up a set of Charles Vess' trading cards . . . Yeah, there are illustrations of the Ballads in the set . . . the "Tam Lin" is excellent.

Chuck Owston

RIFFRAFF

Casey Neill

Mock Turtle 03

From the cover picture of this cassette release, which pictures a group of happy hobgoblins beating on tambourines, guitars and accordians, it gives you an idea of what's inside. This is ragged, anarchistic folk-punk with a real attitude. Consider this chorus of the opening cut:

Hooray for our band of happy, ragged folk
Tellin' all the stories and fireside jokes
Livin' for the music, the love and the laughs
Hooray for the riffraff!

This is an anthem to buskers, travellers, crusties, pagans, low lifes, gypsies, vagabonds, hoboos, punkers . . . you name it . . . Neill lumps them in the group he calls "riffraff." This is a crazy, wild song in the mold of the Pogues, the Levellers or the Oysters at their most raucous. I'd *love* to hear a live version of this with an audience of crazed fans.

How do you follow a song like this? With something completely different, "Sad Bones of Her Hands," a gentle, touching song. Neill is definitely onto something here.

"Storyline" rocks out again. This is followed by "The Codfisher," a song that sounds traditional, even though Neill wrote it himself. It is wedded to a group of Cape Breton reels. It has that Maritime Atlantic sound to it, with nice mandolin work. It's a protest, an attack on the powers that be in Canada.

"Where Are You?" and "Flaming Arrows" wind up side one, much in the same mold of rogue folk. The first is a song of lost love, while the latter compares political prisoners with animals in a zoo . . . so it's a song of animal rights/Native American rights/ disenfranchized peoples' rights.

Does anything really change because people *sing* about it? Obviously, Neill thinks /hopes so. He's got that idealistic zeal of a young, freewheelin' Dylan. I remember back in the early 60's hearing songs like "Masters of War" and saying, "This guy is really right."

It never stopped any wars though.

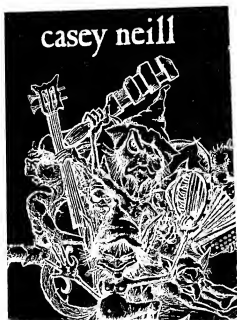
"Anger in Motion" is self-explanatory. "Bear In Mind" is about a real bear, being the totem of the songwriter. "The Hills of Greenmore" is the only Trad. Arr. Song here. "Secret Places" hearkens back to days of childhood, with Dylanesque harmonica and sweet harmonies by Kayla Chorover. I would like to have heard more from her. How about a solo album, Kayla?

I'd buy it

"Disorder" gives us more driving guitar strumming, with a chorus that goes "The Age of Reason is over, this is the Age of Disorder." Then we end with a humorous "Dancing On The Ruins (of Multinational Corporations)", accompanied by a 5-string banjo. What a note to end on.

If you love your folk-rock spiced with protest and angst, grab RIFFRAFF. It'll make you feel like one of the hobgoblins on the cover.

Chuck Owston



BALLADS AND BALLAST by Charles Reilly

One of the questions I'm constantly asked as a performer of Traditional British, Celtic and American Ballads is, "Where can I get copies of these songs? Are they in any books?"

Now I can point these folk to this excellent little book. This slim volume contains many of the better known Child ballads, but also some American ballads and Afro-American work songs and spirituals.

Not only does it give us the words, it explains them as well. This is something that has taken many singers a lifetime to discover. Here, Reilly puts it all in perspective and in one concise form. It's a trade paperback and worth every penny of the cover price.

Reilly is an English professor at Montgomery Community College in Pennsylvania. But he's far from the stodgy old prof type with his head in a pile of dusty manuscripts. From the very excellent introduction on, he gives us lively samples of the rich language of the Ballads. The mythic threads running through the songs will give insight to the beginner as well as the seasoned collector or folksinger.

This book is a welcome addition to anyone's library. I highly recommend it. Put it right on the shelf next to your collection of BALLADS AND SAGAS.

Chuck Owston

Clydewater Publishing Co.
P.O. Box 27764, Philadelphia, PA 19118
1/800/369-0004



DECEMBER

by Phil Rickman

Berkley Books 1996

This is something I picked up at my local K-Mart, possibly the first true folk-rock horror book. It's about an English folk-rock band called The Philosopher's Stone. They weren't drawn together by the fact that they were mates growing up . . . they were put together by the record company because of their psychic abilities. (Record companies will go to any lengths to hype their product).

Anyway, these four guys and a girl (remind you of anyone?) record in a studio built in an old medieval abbey where a massacre took place about 800 years ago. Just some good old Norman fun, butchering a bunch of Welshmen. Including a noted harper named Aelwyn.

To make a long story short . . . Philosopher's Stone recorded the notorious "Black Album," but it was never released. The tapes were destroyed . . . or were they?

Suddenly it's the 90's. Folk-rock is making a resurgence and up pops the lost album . . . and people begin to die. In horrible ways.

What do you think? Did she jump or was she pushed?
It's all here in DECEMBER.

Why is it called DECEMBER? Because that's when the Black Album was recorded, on Dec. 8, 1980, the day John Lennon was assassinated. Synchronicity and weirdness abounds.

DECEMBER isn't for everybody, but it just might be your cup 'o tea.

I, for one, loved it.

Chuck Owston

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willow garden - owl-stone

meg merilees - owl stone &

meredith thompson

the cuckoo (version 2) - rodo willings

with jon weiner

john barleycorn must die - carnival
of souls

the barley song - a company of knaves

polly dargh - carnival of souls

soul cakes - Briar Rose

matty groves - a company of knaves & carnival of
souls

shaking of the sheets - carnival of souls

hangman - owl-stone

trees they grow high - mandy owston

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